



Town of Sudbury

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Sudbury Transportation Committee

Minutes

Friday, July 26, 2024

10:30 AM

Via Town Zoom Conference Call

Core Members Present: Daniel Carty, Debra Galloway, Alice Sapienza, Bob Lieberman, Cheryl Wallace

Core Members Absent: Adam Burney

Advisory Group Present:

Advisory Group Absent: Dani Marini-King, Martha Welsh, Dan Nason, Chief Scott Nix, Carmine Gentile, Maura Carty

Guests: Jim Nee and Daniel Fitch, MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Lynn Puorro (Sudbury TV) and Linda Faust, Sudbury resident

Confirmation of Quorum: The statutory requirements as to notice having been met, Dan as chair convened the meeting at 10:32 AM. He made an announcement that this was a public meeting, there should be no expectation of privacy, and the meeting was being broadcast live via Zoom and recorded by Sudbury TV. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. Debra agreed to be co-host.

Selection of Clerk: Debra volunteered to take meeting minutes.

Administrative Updates: Dan recapped the action items from last meeting and agenda items for discussion:

- Finances
- Catch Connect
- Hospital Shuttle
- Uber Data
- Minutes

Dan Carty welcomed guests Jim Nee and Daniel Fitch, as well as Linda Faust.

Catch Connect Sudbury Update

Debra shared that she and Daniel presented information on the new Catch Connect Sudbury service to the two buildings at the Coolidge at Sudbury development. Debra thanked Daniel for his great presentation. The presentations were well attended.

Jim Nee reported that ridership, though low, is normal for the start of a new program like Catch Connect. In fact, he feels that in the last week there has been organic growth, perhaps in response to outreach efforts. There were 17 riders in the previous week, and 25-30 in the most recent week.

Jim also shared that in addition to the extension of fare free transit service (which included Catch Connect and the Hospital shuttle), the current state budget contains funding to offer fare free service through the current fiscal year (FY 2025) which would encompass the grant years for both Catch Connect and the Hospital shuttle. The budget needs signature from Gov. Healey, so it is not final yet. If the budget is approved as is, the MWRTA and other RTAs will be applying for the fare funding.

Daniel reported that there was a request at the Coolidge presentation to provide ride timing updates to those who call in, similar as to the updates received by those using the app. Daniel is working on an automated call that will update caller as to when the Catch Connect van is 5 minutes away from their location.

Bob Lieberman wondered what ridership numbers would be considered a success. Jim responded current average riders/hour is 0.7 riders/hour and a goal is to have more than 2 riders/hour, 3 being the ultimate goal for a successful program that could become ongoing and supported going forward. Jim added that the last week rider number was 25-30 and the goal is to increase that to 90. We are off to a good start. Alice noted that the surge pricing for Uber during Catch Connect hours has not started yet.

Dan expects that school students may begin to use Catch Connect once school is back in session. Cheryl reported that she learned that Commission on Disability member's children and friends have used it.

Comments from Catch Connect Rider

Linda Faust expressed that she is grateful for the service but has constructive feedback. She uses the phone number to call for Catch Connect reservations. She has shared her concerns with Debra but did not hear back from her yet. However, her concerns include: 1) the wait time on the phone – she would like to eliminate that and speak directly to a live person, 2) she reported that the Connect van has a very high step when disembarking – she needed to hold the driver's shoulder to feel safe, and 3) she asked the Call Center staff if they would take her cell phone number so that she could be called if she has trouble connecting with the van – because she is vision-impaired and hearing-impaired – but the Call Center said they can't do that.

Daniel reported that the call wait times are monitored and they aim for an average of 60 seconds or less of a wait; however, there are times when there will be an above average wait. Daniel also wanted to share that callers at times have used the other call center number, rather than the Catch Connect number and this can delay the answer. Daniel also stated that they will ensure that Linda is notified about the van wait time, once the new system feature is available that provides the 5 minute

out notification. Debra reported Linda's concerns to MWRTA last week but apologized for not calling Linda back to notify her about this.

Hospital Shuttle

Alice, Debra, Daniel, Eva Willens (MWRTA), Lisa Long (MWRTA), and Julie Secord (Wayland COA) met this week to hash out additional details for the Hospital Shuttle service, including the schedule and communications for riders. It was agreed that the MWRTA will determine the actual stops for the shuttle, we will communicate with riders that they should coordinate assistance if needed when they arrive at the stop near the hospital (whether it is a wheelchair, or family/aide to assist them). The van may not be able to stop nearest the entrance that they are seeking.

Dan suggested that we may want to find riders to try out the service during the first week or two to learn about any questions. Both Debra and Julie Secord had agreed this was a good idea in the recent Shuttle meeting. Other methods of communications are planned to help prospective riders understand how to access and use the shuttle service.

Jim Nee feels that the MWRTA is ready to start the Hospital Shuttle service. It will be very similar to the current Boston Hospital Shuttle operating from Framingham, Natick and Wellesley into Boston.

Alice noted that if someone misses a shuttle, their first call is to the MWRTA Call Center. She also reported that we may be contacting Go Go Grandparent concierge service to assist riders who need an Emergency ride home due to unforeseen circumstances. If the MWRTA was to provide an after-hours Emergency Ride home to a rider, we would pay for the cost.

The Committee's main task is to solidify the schedule and a few other details, and then to communicate with the public about this new service.

We will also need to communicate with current Go Sudbury Uber and Taxi riders and to let them know we will need to curtail the number of rides available per person.

For individuals out of town who would like to use the Hospital Shuttle, we need to have a pickup point in town. The most likely location is the "bus stop" at the Whole Foods parking lot. Debra will be following up with Whole Foods to see if people can wait there and if needed, park in the lot. Julie Secord will be contacting the Stop and Shop in Wayland for the same purpose.

Alice wondered about sharing information about the Mass. General Brigham (MGB) shuttle that exists in Boston between the Longwood Medical Area and the Mass. General Hospital area. Could this schedule be shared on this new Hospital Shuttle. Jim cautioned that the MGB shuttle is a private shuttle system. He recommended that we could share a link to their website and their phone number instead of the schedule.

Bob asked for clarification on what the registration process entails for someone signing up for the new Hospital shuttle. Jim shared the registration on screen. It is a simple, one page form that requests basic information such as name, phone number, and emergency contact information. This information will most likely be given over the phone the first time someone calls.

Bob also asked about the average time expected for a shuttle rider to get to a Boston hospital. This timing will depend on traffic and the number of riders on a given day, but could be 45 minutes.

Finances

Dan shared the Financial report with details on all the transportation services costs and funding. The total cost of all programs for June 2024 was \$14,383. The cost of the services continues to be high and will use up the funding quickly without changes. Dan reported a total of 426 unique individuals in the two Go Sudbury programs, and a steady number of new applicants each month: in June, 9 new Taxi riders, and 8 new Uber riders.

Dan shared on screen a spreadsheet including data extracted from Uber reports (March-June 2024), with all rider personal information removed. The spreadsheet can be manipulated to exhibit number of rides by day of the week, time of day, etc. There appeared to be 44 rides that would be eligible for the Catch Connect Service.

The tables also showed 138 of the Uber rides were likely for medical office destinations and there were a significant number of rides to Boston that could possibly benefit from the Hospital shuttle. Cheryl pointed out that there were a number of rides on Mondays and Fridays – days on which the Hospital shuttle does not operate. Some people may not have doctors or medical services available on Tuesdays-Thursdays – it is important to remember that.

Bob asked if the hospital shuttle could possible shift to other days of the week if needed. Jim responded that because it is grant-funded, the days are not necessarily fixed and if demand warranted it, the service could be shifted to another day/time.

Due to continued high costs for both the GoSudbury Taxi and Uber programs, Dan initiated a discussion about ride caps both the Go Sudbury Uber and Taxi programs and copays for the Taxi program. The Committee discussed the idea of shifting back to the earlier ride limits of 4 one-way Uber rides per person per month, and 6 one-way Taxi rides per person per month.

The Taxi program is particularly expensive, costing \$9,428 in June. GoSudbury Taxi co-pays have been considered previously but implementing copays is logistically challenging, and would involve significant staff time. Taxi copays may require a revolving account to hold the funds. It was decided to consider taxi copays more fully at the next meeting.

Bob Lieberman made a motion to decrease GoSudbury ride limits - as of September 1 - to 4 one-way rides per person per month for the Uber program and 6 one-way rides per person per month for the Taxi program. This motion was seconded by Debra Galloway and voted unanimously by the Committee.

Uber Profile vs. Voucher Dashboard

The Committee briefly discussed the Uber program software. Uber is encouraging Sudbury to transition from a profile system to their voucher system. Uber is transitioning away from the profiles system. They have moved most of their contractors to the voucher system and provide tech support

and updates for this system, but no longer provide updates for the profiles system. There are benefits to using the voucher system, but the voucher dashboard will not give exact address locations that are needed for the grant reporting that is required of the Committee. The Committee will continue to consider Uber's request but will not be acting on it yet.

TIP Report

Dan shared a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) report with the Committee. The TIP report includes the 5-year funding plan for our region. Dan noted that the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) is using infrastructure funds for a Microtransit service.

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes were reviewed for the July 12 Transportation Committee meeting. Alice moved and Debra seconded approval of the Minutes as displayed and edited.

Next Meeting

The next Transportation Committee meeting date will be Friday, August 9 at 11:00 AM via Zoom.

Adjournment: Dan asked for a motion to adjourn; Alice moved, and Debra seconded. Roll call was unanimous, and the meeting ended at 11:45 AM.